



## Sweden

### Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2000](#)

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Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The King is Chief of State. The Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, exercises executive authority. The judiciary is independent.

The Government effectively controls the police, all security organizations, and the armed forces.

Sweden has an advanced industrial economy, mainly market based, and a high standard of living, with extensive social welfare services.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. The Government has longstanding programs to deal with violence against women and abuse of children and took steps against trafficking in women. Neo-Nazi violence remained a problem.

#### RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

##### Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

###### a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political killings.

In June a police officer was charged with breach of duty, serious ill treatment, and causing the death of another, in a March incident in which he shot a fleeing suspect. The police officer reportedly fired a warning shot, then shot the man from behind because he was convinced that the suspect was armed.

In June a prison escapee died after being caught and restrained by four prison guards. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) are concerned that the man may have died as a result of excessive use of force by the guards. The guards were suspended pending the results of a police investigation into the death.

The Prosecutor General closed his review of the initial investigation of a 1995 case in which a man died in police custody, acknowledging that there had been flaws in the investigation. He urged that a further, independent investigation be carried out into how the authorities had handled the different aspects of the case. No one was ever prosecuted for the death, although the two policemen involved were convicted of a minor offense in 1996. A report by the parliamentary Ombudsman concluded that the current procedure for dealing with complaints against the police was inadequate and proposed that an independent system be established. In June the Minister of Justice decided to appoint a commission of inquiry to look into past deaths in custody in order to propose safeguards. NGO's remain very interested in such cases.

###### b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

### c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices, and the authorities generally respect such prohibitions. Complaints of the excessive use of force by the police are infrequent. Thorough investigations have produced no evidence of a systemic problem. Typically, police officers found guilty of abuse are suspended or otherwise disciplined.

Five cases of excessive use of force by policemen during the year were under investigation. Three officers were fined for excessive use of force in October 1999, but there were no reported cases of policemen being fired for committing crimes in the course of their duties—including the use of excessive force.

Prison conditions meet minimum international standards, and the Government permits visits by human rights monitors.

### d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest, detention, and exile, and the Government observes these prohibitions. Arrests are by warrant. The police must file charges within 6 hours against persons detained for disturbing the public order or considered dangerous, and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. The law requires arraignment within 48 hours. The time between arrest and the first court hearing may be extended to 96 hours for detainees considered dangerous, likely to destroy evidence, or likely to flee. In cases involving more than one individual and in the case of foreigners, courts can and do order continued detention for 2 weeks at a time while police are investigating. Such detentions can be protracted, particularly in drug cases. Other than such dangerous suspects, detainees routinely are released pending trial. Bail as such does not exist. If a person files for bankruptcy and refuses to cooperate with an official investigation, a court may order detention for up to 3 months, with judicial review every 2 weeks.

### e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government respects this provision in practice. The judiciary provides citizens with a fair and efficient judicial process.

The judicial system is composed of three levels of courts: District courts, a court of appeals, and a Supreme Court. All criminal and civil cases are heard first in district court regardless of the severity of the alleged crime.

The Constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary vigorously enforces this right.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

### f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law limits home searches to investigations of major crimes punishable by at least 2 years' imprisonment. The authorities respect this provision. Normally the police must obtain court approval for a search or a wiretap. However, a senior police official may approve a search if time is a critical factor or the case involves a threat to life. The national police and the Prosecutor General's Office submit a report to Parliament every year detailing all of the electronic monitoring done during the previous year. In April the Minister of Justice presented a proposal to expand the use of police wiretapping. According to the proposal, wiretapping would be allowed only if serious drug crimes or serious crimes that would result in at least 4 years' imprisonment were suspected. A parliamentary decision is likely in 2001. A court must grant permission for wiretaps on a case-by-case basis. NGO's were critical of the Ministry's proposal.

In 1997 journalistic investigations focused attention on the country's pre-1976 practice of forced sterilization. The majority of persons sterilized were disabled either mentally or physically. Such operations were known for years to have taken place under pre-World War II legislation, most of them without force. It initially was reported that between 1934 and 1976, 62,888 forced sterilizations were carried out, 95 percent of them on women. In 1999 a government-appointed commission concluded that approximately 10,000 to 15,000 of these sterilizations were forced. The commission gave priority to the question of damages to victims and also looked into the possible existence of other categories of victims. The commission concluded its inquiry in 1999, and Parliament decided to pay damages of approximately \$21,000 (175,000 krona) to each victim. By October 1,925 persons had applied for compensation. By year's end, some 1,300 had received payment. The Government allocated additional resources to pay compensation since the number of applicants far exceeded expectations.

## Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

### a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government respects these provisions in practice. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned. The Government subsidizes daily newspapers, regardless of political affiliation. Broadcasters operate under a state concession. Until a few years ago, the State had a monopoly over ground-based broadcasting, but a variety of commercial television channels (one ground-based and several via satellite or cable), and several commercial radio stations now exist.

The Government may censor publications containing national security information. A quasi-governmental body excises extremely graphic violence from films, television programs, and videos.

Criticism of child pornography is widespread, and the debate on the legality of ownership of pornographic material continued. A 1999 law criminalizes the possession and handling of child pornography. It also is illegal to publish or distribute such material. The Queen remains a strong and popular advocate of children's rights and an active opponent of child pornography.

Academic freedom is respected.

### b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of peaceful assembly, and the Government respects this right in practice. Police require a permit for public demonstrations. The authorities routinely grant such permits, with rare exceptions to prevent clashes between antagonistic groups or due to insufficient police resources to patrol an event adequately.

The Constitution provides for freedom of association, and the Government respects this right in practice. The debate that began in 1999 over the possible criminalization of neo-Nazi organizations continued.

### c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects that right in practice. The Government does not hamper the practice or teaching of any faith.

The country maintained a state (Lutheran) church for several hundred years, supported by a general "church tax" (although the Government routinely grants exemptions). However, in 1995 the Church of Sweden and the Government agreed to a formal separation, which became effective during the year, but the Church still is to receive some state support. The reform also made it possible for all religious communities to register by fulfilling certain--mainly organizational--requirements. The principles governing state support to all religious communities have been laid down in a new special act of law.

### d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the Government respects them in practice.

The law and regulations incorporate the precepts of the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. They are also consistent with the European Union's (EU) Dublin Convention. The Government cooperates with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees; it also provides first asylum. In keeping with international agreements, the Government reviewed applications for asylum more thoroughly than before. The number of applications for asylum decreased in 1999 to 11,231 (from 12,844 in 1998). Applicants included 3,576 Iraqi citizens, 1,812 from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and 854 Iranians. The Government approved 5,597 applications in 1999. A total of 6,835 persons sought asylum through July 2000. Nearly 11 percent of the country's population is foreign born.

The Government carries out expeditious returns of asylum seekers from EU countries or from countries with which there are reciprocal return agreements. In many cases, asylum seekers were deported within 72 hours of arrival, and NGO's were critical of their lack of access to legal counsel. To remedy this situation, the Government is experimenting with pilot programs at selected border crossings to provide expeditious legal

assistance. Most of these are cases of persons who passed through or have asylum determinations pending in other EU countries. Applications can remain under consideration for long periods of time with applicants in uncertain status. Because of the appeals process in the courts, cases can extend for several years. These cases are few in number.

The principal complaint of NGO's is that the country lacks a transparent process for making decisions in asylum cases. They maintain that the asylum procedures lack rules to guide the conduct of authorities to ensure legal protection for asylum seekers. The procedures accord great discretion to individuals in decisionmaking positions. According to the NGO's, the decisionmakers use arbitrary, unspecified, and inconsistent criteria. NGO's are particularly critical of the unclear burden of proof and the lack of an appeals process to an independent court. Four cases, in which the Government sought to return asylum seekers to countries where they feared persecution, were pending at the U.N. Committee Against Torture; the Committee was expected to review the cases in the fall of 2000.

The Government conducted a review of the safety of countries that are considered safe third countries. NGO's raised the issue of insufficient protection for returnees to countries without a reciprocal return agreement. While these countries provide safe asylum, they are often reluctant to accept asylum seekers deported from European countries. Despite the Government's review, late in the year the authorities ordered the deportation of two Iranian asylum seekers to Tehran. The deportation was halted after the U.N. Committee Against Torture decided to review both cases to determine if the individuals would face torture if returned to Tehran.

A total of 3,752 Kosovar Albanian refugees were granted temporary residence permits in 1999, initially valid for 11 months. By July more than 2,500 of the refugees had returned to Kosovo. The Government has accepted over 100,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The Government provides grants to Bosnians to travel to their homeland in order to determine if they wish to be repatriated. It also provides financial incentives for returnees, but there is no forced repatriation. There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

In March the Government withdrew a proposal envisaging changes to its temporary protection regulations in a situation of mass immigration. The proposal was withdrawn following massive criticism by the political opposition, the UNHCR, NGO's, and the parliamentary Committee on Social Insurance.

### Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. Citizens exercised this right most recently in 1998. Elections to the 349-member unicameral Parliament are held every 4 years.

Women participate actively in the political process and Government. They constitute 43.6 percent of the Parliament and 55 percent of the Cabinet. The governing Social Democratic Party largely kept its pledge to place women in half of all political appointments at all levels.

### Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Several private organizations actively monitor issues such as the impact of social legislation, anti-immigrant or racist activities, and the condition of the indigenous Sami population. The official ombudsmen publicize abuses of state authority and may initiate actions to rectify such abuses. Government agencies are in close contact with a variety of local and international groups working in the country and abroad to improve human rights observance, and they are very open to dialog and input from these groups.

### Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equal rights for all citizens, and the Government respects this provision.

#### Women

A total of 19,982 reported cases of assault against women (excluding rape) were reported in 1999, compared with 20,516 in 1998. Most involved spousal abuse. In three-quarters of the assaults, the perpetrator was an acquaintance of the victim. Reported abuse against women occurs disproportionately in immigrant communities. On average 33 murders of women and girls are reported each year, half of them by men closely related to the victim. The number of reported rapes of persons over age 15 was 1,747 in 1999, compared with 1,386 in 1998. The law does not differentiate between spousal and nonspousal rape. In 1998 (latest statistics

available) 4,928 cases of violence against women were prosecuted, as were 243 rape cases, 208 of which were sexual assaults on persons over age 15.

Trafficking in women from Russia and the Baltics for purposes of forced prostitution continues to be a small but serious problem (see Section 6.f.). The purchase or attempted purchase of sexual services became illegal in 1999.

The Government has longstanding programs to deal with violence against women. The law provides complainants with protection from contact with their abusers, if so desired. In some cases, the authorities help women obtain new identities and homes. The Government provides electronic alarms or bodyguards for women in extreme danger of assault. Both national and local governments help fund volunteer groups that provide shelter and other assistance to abused women. The authorities strive to apprehend and prosecute abusers. Typically, the sentence for abuse is a prison term--14 months on average--or psychiatric treatment. However, women complain about short sentences and the early release of offenders.

The law prohibits sexual harassment and specifies clearly employers' responsibilities to prevent and--if applicable--to investigate sexual harassment in the workplace and to formulate and post a specific policy and guidelines for the workplace. Employers who do not investigate and intervene against harassment at work can be obliged to pay damages to the victim. As with other forms of discrimination, women and men may take complaints to the courts or to their unions. To combat gender discrimination in the longer term, the Equal Opportunities Act requires all employers, both in the public and private sector, actively to promote equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace.

The law requires employers to treat men and women alike in hiring, promotion, and pay, including equal pay for comparable work. According to 1998 statistics, women's salaries were 82 percent of men's salaries. Adjusting for age, education, and occupational differences between men and women, women average 91 percent of men's salaries. The equal opportunity Ombudsman, a public official, investigates complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. Women and men also may pursue complaints through the courts. A third option, and by far the most common, involves settling allegations with the employee's labor union as mediator. In 1999 gender discrimination cases by 94 women and 16 men were registered with the equal opportunity Ombudsman. The courts did not rule on any of the cases in 1999 (pending the resolution of 1 of the cases in the European Court of Justice), 11 were settled through mediation, 22 were withdrawn, and 72 were dropped. The remainder were pending. In the past, many of these cases involved salary discrimination.

All employers with more than 10 employees must prepare an annual equality plan, including a survey of pay differences between male and female employees. The equal opportunity Ombudsman reviews these plans.

Women were trafficked for the purpose of forced prostitution (see Section 6.f.).

Under the country's pre-1976 practice of forced sterilization, thousands of persons were sterilized forcibly between 1934 and 1976. The majority of those sterilized were disabled either mentally or physically, and 95 percent were women. In May 1999, Parliament decided to pay damages in such cases (see Section 1.f.).

## Children

The Government demonstrates its strong commitment to children's rights and welfare through its well-funded systems of public education and medical care. The Government provides compulsory, free, and universal primary school education for children for 9 years. It also provides free medical and dental care for all children up to the age of 16 (19 for dental care). Parents receive some \$1,000 per year for each child under 16 years of age. An official children's Ombudsman monitors the Government's programs.

The Government allocates funds to private organizations concerned with children's rights. An NGO, Children's Rights in Society, offers counseling to troubled youngsters. The Government remains active internationally in efforts to prevent child abuse.

Although the physical abuse of children appears relatively uncommon, the public and authorities remain concerned by consistent data indicating an increase in cases over the past several years. The number of reported cases for children under the age of 15 rose to 5,919 in 1999, up from 5,642 in 1998. The number of reported cases of sexual abuse of children under the age of 15 was 2,969 in 1999 and 2,756 in 1998. The U.N. Children's Committee criticized the Government, stating that it provides less protection for the children of immigrant and disadvantaged groups.

The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically in any way. Parents,

teachers, and other adults are subject to prosecution if they physically punish a child, including slapping or spanking. Children have the right to report such abuses to the police. The authorities respect these laws, and the usual sentence is a fine combined with counseling and monitoring by social workers. However, if the situation warrants, authorities may remove children from their homes and place them in foster care. Foster parents virtually never receive permission to adopt long-term foster children, even in cases where the parents are seen as unfit or seek no contact with the child. Critics charge that this policy places the rights of biological parents over the needs of children for security in permanent family situations.

#### People with Disabilities

With one exception, there are no specific laws that prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities, but considerable efforts are made to ensure that the disabled enjoy equal opportunities. A 1999 act prohibits discrimination against disabled persons in the workplace. In May the Parliament adopted a national plan on disability policy that provides for freedom of access and social support as basic rights for disabled citizens. Since 1994 the country has had an Ombudsman for disability issues. The Government provides disabled persons with assistance aimed at allowing them to live as normal a life as possible, preferably outside an institutional setting. This support may include a personal assistant for the severely disabled, plus improvements in the workplace's accessibility to wheelchairs. Government assistance also encompasses services such as home care or group living. Regulations for new buildings require full accessibility, but the Government has no such requirement for existing public buildings. Many buildings and some public transportation remain inaccessible. Deaf children have the right to education in sign language. The parents of disabled children and disabled workers under the age of 65 receive financial assistance every 7 years to buy a car adapted to the person's disability.

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#### Indigenous People

The country counts at least 17,000 Sami (formerly known as Lapps) among its 8.87 million inhabitants (Sami organizations place that number somewhat higher, 25,000 to 30,000). In 1993 the Government allowed the formation of a Sametinget, or Sami Parliament, as an advisory body to the Government. Under the current Government, Sami issues fall under the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Sami continue a protracted struggle for recognition as an indigenous people under a variety of international agreements, such as International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169. Historically, the Government resisted granting the Sami such rights. For example, Sami children had no right to education in their native language until the provision of such education to immigrant group children under a 1977 law forced the Government to grant Sami at least equal treatment. As a result of such education, northern Sami dialects have enjoyed a recent renaissance. However, Sami dialects in the southern portions of traditional Sami lands now may have too few native speakers to survive as living languages. In 1997 the Government initiated an inquiry into whether the country could ratify ILO Convention 169. The inquiry was published in 1999 and concluded that the country could ratify the convention, but that it should not be ratified until a number of steps relating to Sami land rights are taken. No further steps were taken during the year.

In 1994 the Government removed from the Sami the right to control hunting and fishing activities on Sami village lands, permitting instead totally unlimited hunting and fishing activity on all government property. Sami leaders continued to protest this change during the year.

Some Sami state that they face discrimination in housing and employment on an individual basis, particularly in the southern mountain regions. In January the Government officially recognized the Sami people as a national minority in the context of its ratification of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

#### Religious Minorities

The Government continued to take proactive steps to combat anti-Semitism by increasing awareness of Nazi crimes and the Holocaust. Under its living history project, the Government provides educational material on the Holocaust to schoolchildren and families throughout the country. The media are also active in publicizing and condemning neo-Nazi activity.

The Government declared January 27, the anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation, as a national day of

remembrance. In January Sweden hosted a large, high-level international conference on Holocaust education. The Stockholm international forum on the Holocaust was attended by over 40 countries and over 20 heads of state and government.

#### National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Approximately 11 percent of Sweden's population is foreign born, with the largest groups being from Finland, Iran, and the former Yugoslavia. "Skinhead" and neo-Nazi related violence increased during the year. Neo-Nazi activity in the past was rarely lethal or well organized and was directed mostly at immigrants. However, cases over the last couple of years are notable for the fact that they mainly targeted white, native, non-Jewish citizens. Crimes with racial overtones increased, but only 13 per cent of the racist crimes reported could be linked directly to neo-Nazis. Violent incidents with racial overtones have averaged about 100 per year in recent years, although no official statistics are kept.

Three neo-Nazis were sentenced in January to life imprisonment for killing two police officers during the course of a May 1999 bank robbery. Two young neo-Nazis were sentenced to 11 years in prison in April for the murder of a trade union official in October 1999. A third defendant was sentenced to 4 years' imprisonment for being an accessory.

The public continued to urge a tougher stance against neo-Nazi groups. Several demonstrations against violence and racism were organized all over the country. The Government supports volunteer groups that oppose racism and xenophobia. As a result of the 1999 press campaign against 62 of the country's leading neo-Nazis, 5 were expelled from their unions, and 1 was fired from his job.

Most estimates place the number of active neo-Nazis at fewer than 2,000, and there appears to be little popular support for their activities or sentiments. Many citizens doubt whether such youth actually embrace neo-Nazi ideology, and the Government supports activities by volunteer groups working against racism. The Government investigates and prosecutes race-related crimes, although in many clashes between Swedish and immigrant youth gangs, authorities judge both sides to be at fault. Neo-Nazi groups operate legally, but serious discussion has been taking place about outlawing such groups. The Supreme Court ruled that it can be illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia. Rightwing groups, which have and exercise the right to demonstrate, are not permitted to display signs and banners with provocative symbols at their rallies.

The Ombudsman for racial discrimination reported in January that complaints of ethnic discrimination in the labor market increased by 50 percent in 1999 to 184 cases, compared with 122 cases in 1998. The increase could be linked to a new law, introduced in May 1999, which provides easier redress.

A government committee presented a report that proposed a tightening of the laws against Nazi and racist crimes. The committee proposed that a new charge be introduced, "seriously disorderly conduct," in order to be able to prosecute people for crimes that do not fall under "agitation against ethnic groups."

In January the Government decided to ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The decision implies that the Sami people, Swedish Finns, Tornedal-Finns, Roma, and Jews are recognized as national minorities. It means that the Government should support and protect minority languages such as Sami, Finnish, and Yiddish. A new law that gave effect to the conventions entered into force on April 1.

#### Section 6 Worker Rights

##### a. The Right of Association

The work force is approximately 80 percent unionized. Career military personnel, police officers, and civilian government officials, as well as private sector workers in both manufacturing and service industries, are organized. Most business owners belong to counterpart employer organizations.

Unions and employer organizations operate independently of the Government and political parties (although the largest federation of unions has always been linked with the largest political party, the Social Democrats). The law protects the freedom of workers to associate and to strike, as well as for employers to organize and to conduct lockouts. Within limits protecting the public's immediate health and security, public employees also enjoy the right to strike. These laws are respected fully and are not challenged.

Unions have the right to affiliate with international bodies. They are affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the European Trade Union Confederation among others.

#### b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Management-labor cooperation tends to be excellent and nonconfrontational. Labor and management, each represented by a national organization by sector (for example retailers and engineering industries), negotiate framework agreements every 2 to 3 years. More detailed company-level agreements put such framework agreements into effect at the local level. New framework agreements were signed during 1998, with most valid until 2001. In contrast with the recent past, most agreements with labor unions now provide for a degree of individualized pay, including merit bonuses.

The law provides both workers and employers with effective mechanisms for resolving complaints. The vast majority of complaints are resolved informally. The law protects union officials and members from dismissal or reprisals for official union activities. In some instances, unions even demand collective agreements regardless of the views and union status of employees. The Government is studying ways to strengthen the system of public mediation. During the year, a new government office, the Mediation Institute, began functioning. During 1999 there were seven legal and two illegal strikes. No strikes or lockouts were reported during the year, apart from two small wildcat actions in October.

Agreement was reached in 1997 between 12 employer associations and 8 unions representing 800,000 manufacturing employees on steps to prevent strikes and lockouts, such as requiring serious wage negotiations to start 3 months before a collective agreement expires and appointing a mediator if an agreement has not been reached after 2 months. As a result of this agreement, wages increased by approximately 3 percent in 1998 and a further 3 to 3.5 percent in 1999. Similar agreements were signed in the municipal sector and in the retail-commercial and service sectors.

There are no export processing zones.

#### c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, and the authorities effectively enforce this ban. The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and the Government enforces this prohibition effectively. However, women are trafficked to the country for the purposes of forced prostitution (see Section 6.f.).

#### d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

Compulsory 9-year education ends at age 16, and the law permits full-time employment at that age under the supervision of local authorities. Employees under age 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. During summer and other vacation periods, children as young as 13 years may work part time or in "light" work with parental permission. Union representatives, police, and public prosecutors effectively enforce this restriction. The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and the Government enforces this prohibition effectively (see Section 6.c.).

#### e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Wages are set by collective bargaining contracts, which nonunion establishments usually observe as well. Even the lowest paid workers can maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their families through substantial benefits (such as housing or day care support) provided by social welfare entitlement programs. However, cutbacks in these programs have made it harder for some workers to make ends meet, particularly low-paid single women with children.

The standard workweek is 40 hours or less. Both the law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. For workers not covered by a labor agreement, the law stipulates a limit for overtime at 200 hours a year, although exceptions may be granted for key employees with union approval; some collective bargaining agreements put the limit at 150 hours. The law requires a rest period after 5 hours of work but does not stipulate a minimum duration; in practice it is usually 30 minutes. The law also provides all employees with a minimum of 5 weeks of paid annual leave; labor contracts often provide more, particularly for higher ranking private sector employees and older public service workers. Amendments to the labor law in 1997 made it easier for employers to hire workers for limited periods, as well as empowering local unions to agree to exceptions to last-in, first-out laws.

Currently the focus of concern is on the psychosocial aspect of health and safety. Occupational health and safety rules are set by a government-appointed board and monitored by trained union stewards, safety ombudsmen, and, occasionally, government inspectors. These standards are very high, making workplaces both safe and healthy. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in



an inspector. An individual also has the right to halt work in dangerous situations in order to consult a supervisor or safety representative.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit such trafficking, although traffickers are prosecuted under other statutes. Women are trafficked to the country for forced prostitution. In 1999 the Government initiated six court cases against individuals involved in trafficking. The 11 cases prosecuted in 1998-99 resulted in 6 convictions. All of the accused traffickers are Swedish residents with family and personal ties to Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The affected women in these cases, numbering 200 to 500 per year, came principally from Central Europe, the Baltic states, and Russia. The women typically are recruited in their own countries to come and work as cleaners, babysitters, or similar employment. Some reportedly were "purchased" from other traffickers and brought into Sweden. A 1998 baseline report stated that considerable additional information available to the police suggests that the problem of trafficking is more widespread than the few prosecutions indicate.

The Government and the EU provided funds to the Foundation of Women's Forums to combat trafficking in women in the Nordic and Baltic nations by creating interactive networks that link NGO's and research institutions that deal with prevention and the rehabilitation of trafficked women.

[End.]